

Bringing a New Mini Mobile Farmer's Market to the People Through NC Fruits & Veggies Mini Grant Creates Easier Access for WIC Participants

Easier access to fresh and healthy food will strengthen communities from the ground up. So with redemption rates low for the Farmers' Market Nutrition Program (FMNP) in Rockingham County, Brenda Sutton, aka "The Produce Lady" decided to bring the market to the people. Brenda, Rockingham County Cooperative



Extension Director, received a 2010 NC Fruits & Veggies Mini Grant¹ and with this \$1000 purchased three tents to provide shade for the new mini mobile farmer's market operating on the grounds of the Rockingham Governmental Center.

Along with the purchase of the tents, the grant money was also used to help pay for duplication of "The Produce Lady" DVD's which are created through the Plants for Human Health Institute and a grant through the Tobacco Trust Fund. Customers at the market were excited about the free DVD which introduced new ways to prepare produce. Samples of delicious recipes like chocolate zucchini cake were also available at the market. Brenda reported remembering a child taste his first blueberry at the market last summer and hearing him exclaim, "Mom, this is real!"

The WIC Farmers' Market Nutrition Program in NC hopes to attract lower-income shoppers to farmers' markets statewide allowing recipients to redeem their \$4.00 vouchers for fresh fruits and vegetables. Operating on Tuesdays and Thursdays from June 29-July 15th last year, this market provided participating farmers in the member run Rockingham County Farmers' Market another venue to sell their produce. The farmers even gathered the local fruits and veggies in \$4.00 bundles to make purchasing more convenient. It also allowed recipients of the WIC nutrition program an easier method of participation since the on-site market solved

¹ The NC Fruits & Veggies Mini Grants were provided by the NC Fruits & Veggies Nutrition Coalition (www.fruitsandveggiesnc.com). The one-time funding used for sponsoring the grant came from revenue and sponsorships generated by the Coalition.

transportation problems or difficulties with making it to the market during its hours of operation.



Flyers were posted at the health department, Department of Social Services, governmental center and other county offices as well as local daycare centers to announce the availability of the new market.

Rockingham County is a rural county with traditionally low redemption rates for FMNP vouchers so plans are for the market to be better than ever this season. With assistance from Healthy Carolinian volunteers and WIC staff, voucher recipients will be pre-qualified before market day. Streamlining this process will allow more time for shopping and sampling of local fruit and veggies on market days. With spreading the understanding of the value of local food a key issue in our state, this mini mobile market with tents providing shade on hot summer days will help provide access to education, support of local farmers, eating local food and eating more fruits and vegetables!

Read more about “The Produce Lady” and NC fruits and vegetables by visiting <http://plantsforhumanhealth.ncsu.edu/> or www.theproducelady.org